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A
DISSERTATION
ON THE
INSPIRATION
OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT,
AS PROVED FROM THE FACTS RECORDED IN
THE HISTORICAL BOOKS OF IT.

To which is added,
A SKETCH of the ARGUMENTS, by which the
INSPIRATION of the OLD TESTAMENT may be
proved in the easiest Method.

By P. DODDRIDGE, D.D.

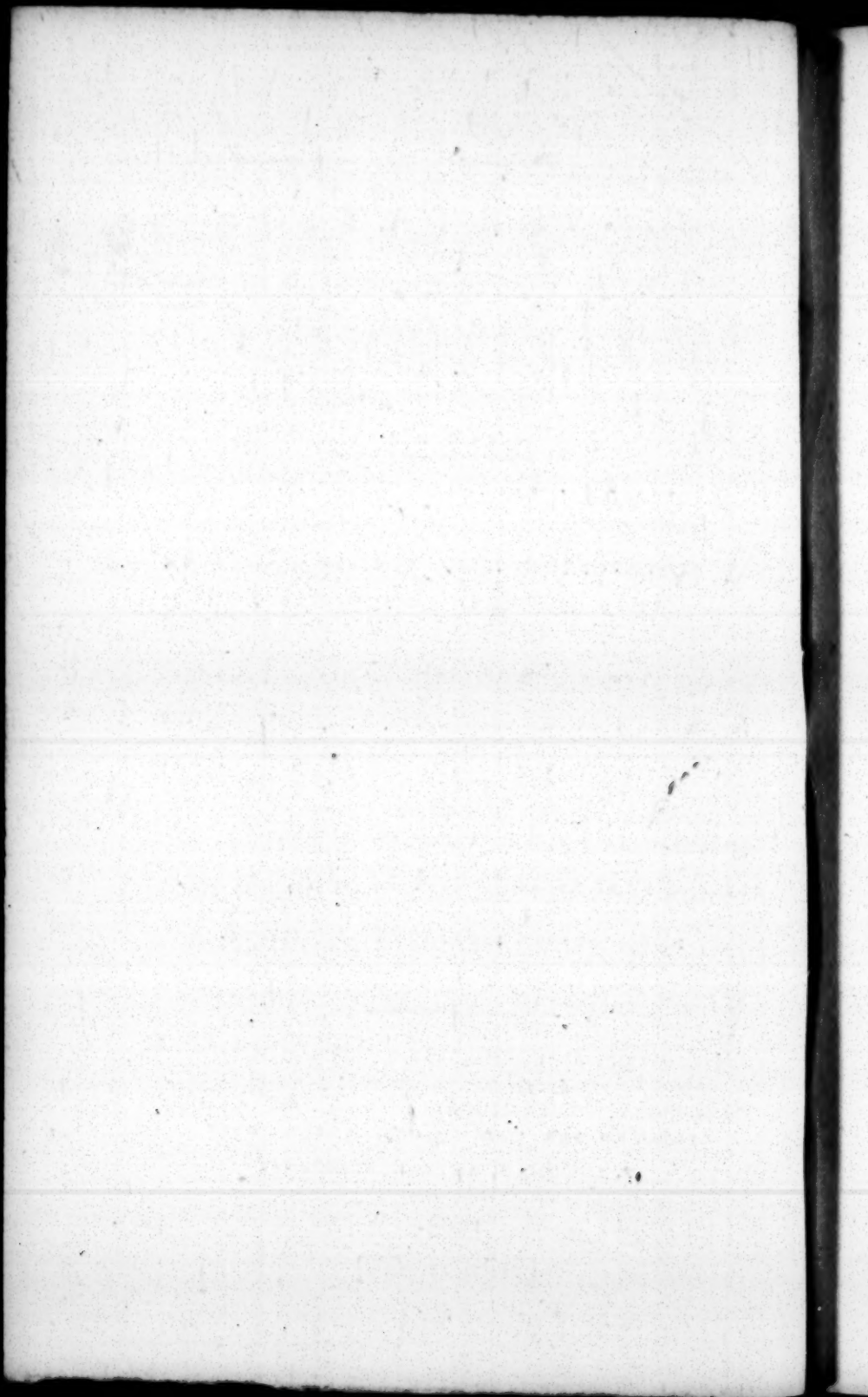
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THE following Dissertation the learned and judicious author printed as an Appendix to the Third Volume of his *Family Expositor*, on the Acts of the Apostles. It is now separately published with a view to its more extensive usefulness, and is intended particularly to obviate the objections which have of late been very plausibly urged against the Inspiration of the New Testament, which the Editor

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is of opinion it does, in so effectual a manner, as to supersede a particular reply to some late publications in favour of modern Socinianism : a system which he cannot consider as established till this work be fully and clearly answered.

A D I S-

A
DISSERTATION
ON THE
INSPIRATION
OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT.

NOTHING can be more evident, than that a firm and cordial belief of the INSPIRATION of the sacred scripture is of the highest moment; not only to the edification and peace of the church, but in a great measure to its very existence. For if this be given up, the authority of the revelation is enervated, and its use destroyed: the star which is to direct our course, is clouded; our compass

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pass is broke to pieces; and we are left to make the voyage of life in sad uncertainty, amidst a thousand rocks, and shelves, and quicksands. I hope, therefore, I may perform a service acceptable to God, and my christian brethren, while I endeavour, as plainly and as briefly as I can, to place some leading proofs of it in a convincing view.

In my *Sermons on the Evidences of the Gospel*, long since published, I endeavoured to demonstrate the *truth* of that history; and every year convinces me more and more, of the unanswerable force of the evidence there displayed. It is with great pleasure that I reflect on the divine blessing, which hath seemed to attend those discourses; and it is a great encouragement to me to hope, that what I am now to offer may be a means of establishing some of my readers, in that regard to the sacred oracles, which will be their best preservative against the errors, and the vices, of that licentious age in which providence hath cast our lot; whereby our fidelity and our zeal are brought to a trial, which few ages but those of martyrdom could have afforded.

It

It will be my business,—first, to state the nature of inspiration in general, and of that kind of it, which (as I apprehend) we are to ascribe to the New Testament:—I shall then prove, that it was undoubtedly written by such inspiration:—and after this, I shall briefly hint at the influence, which this important truth ought always to have upon our temper and conduct; by enforcing which, I apprehend, I shall take the best method to promote a growing persuasion of the truth I am labouring to establish.

I will only premise, that I do not intend this, as a full discussion of the subject; but only, as such a compendious view of the chief proofs, as may, from the easiest and plainest principles, give rational satisfaction to the minds of common christians; who have not leisure, nor perhaps ability, to enter into all the niceties of theological and scholastical controversy.

- I. I shall state the nature of inspiration, and of that kind of it, which we are to ascribe to the New Testament.

In this I shall be the more particular, as I apprehend, the want of a sufficient accuracy here has occasioned some confusion in the reasoning of several worthy persons, who have treated this important subject more largely, than I must here allow myself to do. I shall not however criticise on their account of the matter, but plainly lay down what seems to me intelligible, right, and safe.

By inspiration in general, I would be understood to mean, “ Any supernatural influence of God upon the mind of a rational creature, whereby it is formed to any degree of intellectual improvement, beyond what it would, at that time, and in those circumstances, have attained in a natural way, that is, by the usual exercise of its faculties, unassisted by any special divine interposition.” Thus, if a man were instantaneously enabled to speak a language which he had never learned, how possible soever it might have been for him to have obtained an equal readiness in it by degrees, I believe few would scruple to say, that he owed his acquaintance with it to a divine inspiration.

tion. Or if he gave a true and exact account of what was doing at a distance, and published a particular relation of what he neither saw nor heard, as some of the prophets did ; all the world would own, (if the affair were too complex, and the account too circumstantial, to be the result of a lucky guess,) that he must be inspired with the knowledge of it ; though another account equally exact, given by a person on the spot, would be ascribed to no inspiration at all.

But of this supernatural influence on the minds of men, forming them to such extraordinary intellectual improvements and abilities, there are various sorts and degrees ; which it will be of importance for us accurately to distinguish from each other.

If a person be discoursing either in word or writing, and God do miraculously watch over his mind, and, however secretly, direct it in such a manner, as to keep him more secure from error in what he speaks or writes, than he could have been merely by the natural exercise of his faculties, I should say, he was inspired ; even though there should be

no extraordinary marks of high genius in the work ; or even though another person, with a stronger memory, or relating a fact more immediately after it happened, might naturally have recounted it with equal exactness. Yet still, if there was in this case any thing miraculous, we must, on the principles above, allow an inspiration ; and I would call this, to distinguish it from other and higher degrees, an inspiration of Superintendency.

If this influence should act in such a degree, as absolutely to exclude all mixture of error in a declaration of doctrines or facts so superintended, we might then call it a plenary superintending inspiration ; or, as I would chuse for popular use to express myself in this discourse, a full inspiration.

Now it will from hence follow, (and I desire that it may be seriously attended to,) That a book, the contents of which are entirely true, may be said to be written by a full inspiration, even though it contain many things which the author might have known and recorded merely by the use of his natural faculties, if there be others which he did not so well

well know, or could not without miraculous assistance have so exactly recollected; or if, on the whole, a freedom from all error would not in fact have been found, unless God had thus superintended or watched over his mind and pen. And in regard to such a production, it would be altogether impertinent and insignificant to enquire, how far did natural memory or natural reason operate, and in what particular facts or doctrines did supernatural agency prevail. It is enough, if I know, that what the author says or writes is true, though I know not particularly how he came by this or that truth: for my obligation to receive it arises from its being known truth, and not merely from its being made known this or that way. And should God miraculously assure me, that any particular writing contained nothing but the truth; and should He at the same time tell me, it had been drawn up without any miraculous assistance at all, though I could not then call it inspired, I should be as much obliged to receive and submit to it on its being thus at-

tested by God, as if every single word had been immediately dictated by Him.

It will farther follow from what is said above, That a book may be written by such full inspiration as I have described, though, the author being left to the choice of his own words, phrases, and manner*, there may be some imperfection in the style and method, provided the whole contents of it are true; if the subject be so important, as to make it consistent with the divine wisdom miraculously to interpose, to preserve an entire credibility as to the exact truth of facts recorded, and doctrines delivered as divine. If indeed God were represented, as declaring such a book to be intended by Him as an exact standard for logick, oratory, or poetry, every apparent defect in either would be an internal objection against it. But if it be represented only as intended to teach us Truth, in order

* It is very evident, that the learned *Maimonides* thought this to be the case with regard to the prophets; though I think it least of all to be apprehended in such oracles. See *Maimon. Mor. Nev. Lib. ii. cap. 29.*

to its having a proper influence on our temper and actions, such defects would no more warrant or excuse our rejecting its authority, than the want of a ready utterance or a musical voice would excuse our disregard to a person, who should bring us competent evidence of his being a messenger from God to us.

I have been more particular in stating this kind of inspiration, because it is that which I shall endeavour to assert to the sacred books of the New Testament, and this without any exception or limitation, as they came out of the hands of the apostles; though I allow it is possible, they may, in this or that particular copy, and in some minuter instances which now perhaps affect all our remaining copies, have suffered something by the injuries of time, or the negligence of transcribers, as well as printers: which, that they have in some particulars suffered, is as notorious a fact, as that there is a written or printed copy of them in the world; yet it is at the same time a fact, which no man of common sense or honesty can seriously urge against their authority.

Though

Though it be the main point in my view, to prove that the New Testament is written under that kind of inspiration which I have been explaining, I must nevertheless beg leave to mention two other kinds, of which divines often speak, and which do also in a considerable degree belong to many parts of scripture, though I think it neither expedient, material, nor safe to assert that they run through the whole of it: I mean, an inspiration of Elevation, and of Suggestion.

The former, (as its name plainly intimates,) prevails, where the faculties, though they act in a regular, and, as it seems, a common manner, are nevertheless elevated, or raised to some extraordinary degree, so that the performance is more truly sublime, noble, and pathetic, than what would have been produced merely by the force of a man's natural genius. As for the particular degree of the divine agency, where there is indeed something of this inspiration, perhaps neither the person that is under it, nor any other creature, may be able confidently to pronounce concerning it. Perhaps, nothing less penetrating

trating than the eye of God himself, may be able universally to distinguish that narrow line, which divides what is natural from what is supernatural, in all the productions and powers of imagination, reasoning, and language, or in the effects and powers of memory under the former head. It is a curiosity, in the minute particulars of which we are not at all concerned; as it is the same God, which, whether naturally or miraculously, *worketh all and in all.* (1 Cor. xii. 9.) But if any excellency in the performance itself can speak it to be more than human, productions of this sort are to be found in scripture: and the rank and education of some of the sacred penmen render the hand of God peculiarly conspicuous in the sublimity and lustre of their writings. What the gifts of the Spirit may in every age of the church have done, by operations of this kind, we know not. And I think, it would be presumptuous absolutely to deny, that God might act in some extraordinary degree on some of the heathen writers, to produce those glorious works of antiquity, which have been, under the direction

tion of his providence, so efficacious on the one hand to transmit the evidences of divine revelation, and on the other to illustrate the necessity of it: in consequence of which I cannot forbear saying by the way, that I think they who are intimately acquainted with them, are of all men upon earth the most inexcusable in rejecting christianity. But our inability to mark out the exact boundaries between nature and an extraordinary divine agency, is not much to be regretted; since it does not appear to be the design of providence, by such elevations of sentiment, style, and manner, by any means to bear testimony to the person adorned with them, as a messenger sent to speak in his name; which may as effectually be done in the plainest and simplest forms of expression, without any thing which looks like the heightenings of art, or the sparklings of an extraordinary genius.

The other, which divines have called immediate Suggestion, is the highest and most extraordinary kind of inspiration; and takes place, when the use of our faculties is superseded, and God does as it were speak directly

to the mind ; making such discoveries to it, as it could not otherwise have obtained, and dictating the very words in which these discoveries are to be communicated to others : so that a person, in what he writes from hence, is no other than first the auditor, and then (if I may be allowed the expression,) the secretary of God : as John was of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he wrote from his sacred lips the seven epistles to the Asiatic churches. And it is, no doubt, to an inspiration of this kind that the book of the Revelation owes its original.

It is evident from the definitions above, that there may be a full superintendency, where neither of the latter kinds of inspiration (of elevation, or suggestion,) take place : but I think, we must necessarily allow, that an inspiration of suggestion, so far as it goes, must also imply a full superintendency in recording the history of what has been seen or heard, in any prophetic vision, when it is necessary to make a report of it. For as it would, on the one hand, be impious to imagine, that the blessed God would dictate a falsehood

falsehood to any of his creatures; so neither can we suppose it consistent with the divine wisdom, to suffer the prophet, through infirmity, to err in delivering a message, with which He had expressly charged him; and which would be given in vain, so far as there was a failure in the exact delivery of it.

Besides the last book of the New Testament, I mean, the Revelation, which I have already mentioned in this view, it seems evident to me, that some other parts of it were given by such a suggestion; seeing there are so many predictions interspersed, and so many mysteries revealed, which lay intirely beyond the ken of any human, or perhaps angelic mind. But that this is applicable to all the history of it, or to all things contained in its epistolary parts, I chuse not to assert. For as it cannot be necessary to its entire credibility, (which nothing can more effectually secure than a full superintendency,) it would subject us to many difficulties, which have been so forcibly urged by others, that it is not necessary for me here to repeat them. But I am well assured, that the apparent insufficiency

iciency of the answers which have been returned to these objections, by some very sincere, but I think in this instance, less judicious defenders of scripture, has led some people to conclude, that the scripture was not inspired at all; as if it had been on both sides agreed, that an universal suggestion was the only kind of inspiration worth contending about. The consequence of this hath been, that such as are dissatisfied with the arguments which these defenders of the divine authority of the scripture insist upon, read the scriptures, (if they read them at all,) not to learn their authentic dictates, but to try the sentiments contained in them by the touch-stone of their own reason, and to separate what that shall allow to be right, from what it presumptuously concludes to be wrong. And this boasted standard has been so very defective, that on this mistaken notion they have not only rejected many of the most vital truths of christianity, but even some essential principles of natural religion. And thus they have in effect annihilated the christian revelation, at the very same time that they have acknowledged

ledged the historical truth of the facts on which it is built. This is the body of men, that have affected to call themselves cautious believers: but their character is so admirably well described under that of Agrippa, by my honoured friend *Dr. Watts*, in his little treatise called *The Redeemer and Sanctifier*, that it may be sufficient here to have hinted it thus briefly, as the reason, why out of regard to them as well as others, I have resumed the subject of inspiration, and endeavoured to place it in what I do in my conscience apprehend to be both a safe and a rational light.

That I may remedy, so far as God shall enable me to do it, the great and destructive evil I have just been mentioning, and may establish in the minds of christians a due regard to the sacred oracles of eternal truth, I shall now proceed to the second part of this discourse: in which

II. I am to shew, how evidently the full inspiration of the New Testament, in the sense stated above, follows from the acknowledged truth of the history which
it

it contains, in all its leading and most important facts.

But before I proceed to the discussion of the matter, I must beg leave to observe, that though this is what I apprehend to be the grand argument, I am very far from slighting those other arguments which fall not so directly in my way here.

I greatly revere the testimony of the primitive christian writers, not only to the real existence of the sacred books in those early ages, but also to their divine original: their persuasion of which most evidently appears from the veneration with which they speak of them, even while miraculous gifts remained in the church; and consequently, an exact attendance to a written rule might seem less absolutely necessary, and the authority of inferior teachers might approach nearer to that of the apostles. I believe every candid reader will acknowledge, that nothing can be objected to many strong passages in *Clemens Romanus*, *Polycarp*, *Justin Martyr*, *Irenæus*, *Theophilus Antiochenus*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Tertullian*,

tullian, Origen, Eusebius, and some other ancient writers he has mentioned that are now lost. It is needless to produce them here, after those valuable specimens of them, which Dr. Whitby and Mons. Du Pin have given; and especially, considering what my learned friend Dr. Lardner has with so much industry and accuracy of judgment collected on this head in the second part of his Credibility of the Gospel History. I shall therefore content myself with observing here, that several of the most learned and considerable of these antients speak of this veneration for the sacred writings of the New Testament, not as the result of their own private judgment, but as that in which all the churches were unanimously agreed.*

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* Thus Origen says, (*Philocal. cap. xii. pag. 41.*)
 Δις σι, — ως πιστὸν παραδεξασθαι, οἱ θεοπνευστοὶ εἰσιν.
 “ That if a man would not confess himself to be an
 “ infidel, he must admit the inspiration of the scrip-
 “ tures.” And he elsewhere places the gospels in the
 number of writings, “ which were received as divine
 “ by all the churches of God, and were the elements,
 “ or

The internal characters of divine inspiration, with which every page of the New Testament abounds, do also deserve our attentive notice ; and render the book itself, if considered as detached from all external evidence whatsoever, a compendious demonstration of its own sacred original, and consequently of the certainty of that religion which it teaches. The excellency of its doctrines, the spirituality and elevation of its design, the majesty and simplicity of its style, the agreement of

“ or first principles, of the churches faith :” *Εν πασαις εκκλησιαις Θεσ πεπιστευμένων ειναι Θειων, — Ζτοιχεια της πισεως της εκκλησιας. —* *Tertullian* also lays it down as a fundamental principle in disputing with hereticks, “ that the truth of doctrines is “ to be determined by scripture.” For the question has evidently the force of a strong negation. *Aliunde scilicet loqui possunt de Rebus Fidei, nisi ex Litteris Fidei ? (De Præscript. Hæret. cap. xv.) —* And *Euseb.* quotes a much more antient writer than himself, (*Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. v. cap. 28.*) who calls the scripture, *πισεως αρχαιας κανονα*, “ the rule of antient faith ;” and who afterwards speaking of hereticks declares, “ that if they denied the scriptures to “ be divinely inspired, they were infidels.”

its parts in the most unsuspicious manner, with its more than human efficacy on the hearts and consciences of men, do all concur to give us a very high idea of the New Testament : and I am persuaded, that the wiser and better any man is, and the more familiarly he converses with these unequalled books, the more will he be struck with this evidence. But these things in the general are better felt, than expressed ; and several of the arguments arise, not from particular passages, but from the general tenour of the books ; and consequently, they cannot be judged of, but by a serious and attentive perusal.

Dismissing therefore these topics, not with neglect, but with the sincerest expressions of just and high veneration, I now proceed to that grand proof of the inspiration of the New Testament, which is derived from the credibility of its leading *facts* ; which having so fully illustrated in the sermons referred to above, I think I have a just title to assume as the foundation of what farther reasonings may occur.

Admitting

Admitting this great principle, it is undeniably certain,—That Jesus of Nazareth was a most extraordinary person:—That after having been foretold by many prophets, in distant periods of time, he was at length, agreeably to the repeated declaration of an angel, first to a priest ministering at the golden altar in the temple, and then to his mother, conceived by a virgin of David's family:—That his birth was proclaimed by a choir of angels, who celebrated it in celestial anthems, as the foundation of peace on earth, and the most glorious display of divine benevolence to men:—That before his public appearance, a person greater than any of the prophets, and whose birth had also been foretold by an angel, was sent to prepare his way:—That on his being baptized, he was anointed with a wonderful effusion of the Spirit, poured down upon him by a visible symbol: and that the efficacy of this sacred agent, continually residing in him, was apparent throughout the whole course of his ministry; not only in the unspotted sanctity of his life, amidst a thousand most violent temptations, and in the

bright assemblage of virtues and graces which shone in it, with a lustre before unknown, and since absolutely unparalleled ; but also in a multitude of various works of wonder and mercy, which he miraculously wrought, on those whose diseases were of the most desperate and incurable nature, and even on the dead, whom that almighty voice of his, which had driven out the fiercest infernal spirits, and calmed the rage of tempests, did with serene majesty awaken into life, as from a slumber.—It is also on the same foundation certain, That this illustrious person, having by the malice of his enemies been most unjustly and cruelly put to death, did on the third day arise from the dead :—and that, after having given to his disciples the most abundant proofs of that important fact, he at length ascended to heaven gradually in their sight ; angels appearing to assure them, he should as visibly descend from thence to the universal judgment, the administration of which he had declared to be committed to him.

I must

I must freely declare, that had I been an entire stranger to the sacred story, and proceeded no farther in it than this, (supposing me firmly to have believed all those wonderful things, though delivered in the shortest abstract that could have been made of them,) I should readily have concluded, that this extraordinary person, being sent (as it plainly appears from the history, that he was,) with a divine revelation for the benefit of all nations, and of all ages, had taken care to leave some authentic records of the doctrine which he taught. And if I had farther found, that he had left no such records written by himself, I should naturally have concluded, that he took effectual care, that some of his followers should be enabled to deliver down to posterity the system of religion which he taught, in the most accurate manner; with all such extraordinary assistance from God, as the nature of the subject required, in order to rendering their accounts exact. And I believe, every reasonable man would draw this inference: because it is very apparent, that the great end of this vast and astonishing

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apparatus, (for vast and astonishing it would appear, if what relates to Jesus alone were taken into the survey,) must in the nature of things be frustrated, if no such records were provided: it being morally impossible, that unwritten tradition should convey a system of religion pure and uncorrupted, even to the next generation; and much more, that it should so convey it to the end of time. And it would seem, so far as we can judge, by no means worthy the divine wisdom, to suffer the good effects of such a great and noble plan to be lost, for want of so easy an expedient: especially, since men of the age and country in which these things happened, were not only blessed with the use of letters, but were remarkable for their application to them, and for great proficiency in various branches of learning. And if I should not only have an abstract of this history of Jesus, which I judged credible, but should also be so happy as to have the four gospels in my hand, with convincing evidences of their being genuine, (which we here suppose,) I should on these principles assuredly argue,

that not only the leading facts, but likewise the system of doctrines and discourses delivered in them, might entirely be depended upon: nor could I conceive the truth of such doctrines and discourses to be separable from the general truth of the leading facts referred to above; having (as I here suppose,) proper evidences to convince me, that the penmen of these books were the persons, by whom the memory of these events was to be delivered down to posterity: which is a farther principle, that none of common sense and modesty can pretend to contest; none appearing as their competitors, whose pretensions are worthy to be named.

But my apprehension of the full authenticity and credibility of these writers would, on the supposition I am here making, greatly increase, as I proceeded to that excellent and useful book, the *Acts* of the holy apostles: since I learn from thence, that in a very few days after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, the Spirit of God was, according to his promise, poured out upon his apostles in an
abundant

abundant manner, attended with the visible appearance of a lambent celestial flame : and that, in consequence of this amazing unction, the poor fishermen of Galilee, and their companions, were in a moment enabled to speak, with the greatest readiness and propriety, *Latin, Greek, Arabick, Coptick, Persick*, and a variety of other languages, the first rudiments of which they had never learnt ; and also to perform all kinds of miracles, equal to those of their master, and in some circumstances superior to them. My veneration for the writings of these men (and I here suppose, I know those of the New Testament to be so,) must be unparalleled, when I think who and what they were : and I am so struck with this plain, but divinely powerful argument, that I must intreat my reader to review with me, a little more particularly, some of the actions and circumstances of these holy men, to whose writings I am labouring to conciliate his unreserved regard.

Let them all be considered, as preaching the gospel in that extraordinary manner, on the day of Pentecost ; and a few days after, when

when some of their companions had been seized and threatened by the Sanhedrim, as anointed again with such an effusion of the Spirit, as shook the very house in which they were, and inspired them all at once with the same sublime hymn of praise. Let them be considered, as afterwards led out of prison by an angel, and commanded by him to go and preach the gospel in the temple, under the remarkable phraseology of *the words of this life*; as if the whole life and happiness of the human race depended on their knowing and receiving it. Nor let us here forget that extraordinary power, common to all the apostles, of communicating the miraculous gifts of the Spirit by the imposition of their hands. Had we nothing particularly to say of any one, more than these grand things which we hear of them all, it must surely command our reverence to their writings, and set them at a vast distance from any of merely human original.

But through the singular providence of God it hath so happened, that we have the most particular history of the lives of those apostles,

to

to whose writings we are generally most indebted : I mean, *John*, *Peter*, and *Paul*.

With respect to *John* we know, that besides the concern he had in the cure of the lame man, he was favoured with the visions of God in the isle of *Patmos* ; where our Lord, after an abode of more than half a century on the throne of his glory at his Father's right hand, did him the unequalled honour to use him as his amanuensis, or secretary ; expressly dictating to him the letters he was pleased to send to the seven churches in *Asia*. How easily then may we suppose him, so to have presided over his other writings, as to have secured him from mistakes in them !

Consider *Peter*, as striking *Ananias* and *Sapphira* dead with a word ; as curing, by the like powerful word, one cripple at Jerusalem, and another at Lydda ; and calling back *Dorcas*, even from the dead. Let us view him in that grand circumstance, of being marked out so particularly by an angel to *Cornelius*, and sent to him as the oracle of God himself, from whom that worthy and honourable person was to hear words, by which

which he and all his house should be saved : and after this let us view him, as once more delivered out of the hand of Herod, and from *all the expectation of the people of the Jews*, by an angel, who struck off his chains, and opened the doors of his prison, the very night before he was to have been executed. And let any one, with these particulars in his eye, added to the foregoing in which he shared with all his brethren, say, What more could be necessary, to prove the divine inspiration of what he taught ; so far as inspiration was requisite, to render it entirely authentic : or let any one farther say, Upon what imaginable pretence the authority of his writings can be denied, if that of his preaching be granted.

And to mention no more, let *Paul*, that great scribe, instructed in the kingdom of heaven, to whose pen we owe so many invaluable epistles, be considered in the same view : and let us endeavour to impress our minds with the various scenes through which we know he passed, and the distinguished favours with which his master honoured him ; that we may judge, how we are to receive
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the instructions of his pen. Let us therefore think of him, as so miraculously called by the voice of Christ to the profession of his gospel, when he was persecuting it even to the death; as receiving a full and distinct revelation of that glorious, but to him quite unknown gospel, by the immediate inspiration of its divine author; which is a fact he expressly witnesses, and in which he could not possibly be mistaken. Think of the lustre of those astonishing works which shone round him wherever he went, and of those wrought in his favour, which shewed him so eminently the care of heaven: dæmons ejected; distempers cured, sometimes with a touch, and sometimes without, by a garment sent from him to the patient; his motions guided from place to place by a divine oracle; *Elymas* struck blind for opposing him; his bands loosed by an earthquake; his strength and vigour instantaneously restored, when the rage of the mutable and barbarous populace at *Lysra* had stoned him and left him for dead; and to add no more, his safety in a shipwreck, with that of near three hundred more in the
same

same vessel for his sake, promised by an angel, and accomplished without the loss of a single person, when they had expected nothing but an universal ruin. Let us, I say, think of Paul in these circumstances; and with these facts full in our view, let us judge, whether it is at all probable, yea whether it be morally possible, that a man, sent out and attended with such credentials as these, should be so left of God, amidst all these tokens of his constant care, as to mingle error with sound doctrine, and his own fancies with the divine revelations, which we are sure he received: or whether, if he were not left to such effects of human frailty in his preaching, but might have been regarded by his hearers with entire credit, he would be left to them in those writings, by which he was (as it were) to preach to all future generations of men, from one end of the world to the other; and by which, being dead, he yet speaketh, in all languages, and to all christian assemblies.

I cannot forbear thinking this plain argument, so well adapted to popular use, abundantly sufficient to carry conviction to every candid

candid mind, in proportion to the degree of its attention and penetration. And I am almost afraid, that some should think I have bestowed an unnecessary labour, thus particularly to state a matter, which hath such a flood of light poured in upon it from almost every page of the sacred story. But I have been obliged, in the course of my exposition, to meditate much on these facts ; and under the deep impression I could not but speak, as out of the fulness of my heart.

Yet after all I have already said, I should be very unjust to this argument, if I did not endeavour to represent to my reader, how much it is strengthened, on the one hand, by the express and comprehensive promises which our Redeemer made to his apostles ; and on the other, by the peculiar language in which the apostles themselves speak of their preaching and writings, and the high regard they challenge to each ; a regard, which nothing could justify them in demanding, but a consciousness that they were indeed under a full inspiration.

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The *Promises* of our Lord Jesus Christ must undoubtedly have a very great weight, with all that have reflected on that indisputable testimony, which God himself bore to him in numberless instances. And therefore, though they are so very well known, I must beg leave, not only to refer to them, but to recite the chief of them at large: and I intreat the reader to consider, how he can reconcile them with an apprehension, that our Lord Jesus Christ did at the same time intend to leave the persons to whom he made such promises, liable to mistake both in facts and doctrines: and being deceived themselves, to mislead such as should depend upon their testimony, where they professed themselves to be thoroughly informed.

In that copious and excellent discourse, which our Lord addressed to the apostles, just before he quitted the guest-chamber to go to the garden of Gethsemane, (that is, but a few hours before his death,) the grand consolation he urges to his sorrowful disciples, is this; That he would send his Spirit upon them. The donation of which Spirit is represented,

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as the first fruits of Christ's intercession. When after so long an absence, and such terrible sufferings, he should be restored to his father's embraces, this is spoken of as the first petition preferred by him, and the first favour granted to his church for his sake: (John xiv. 16.) *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.* Yea, Christ declares, (and he could not be mistaken in it,) that the agency of this Spirit should so abundantly counter-balance all the advantages they received from his bodily presence, that strong as their affection to him was, they would in that view have reason to rejoice in his leaving them: (John xvi. 7.) *I tell you the truth, that is, I say what may be depended upon as a most important certainty, (and very important indeed such a representation was;) it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* Now from these expressions, were they alone, I think we might probably infer, that the apostles, after having received the Spirit, would

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be in no more danger of erring in their writings, than they would have been, if Jesus himself had always been near them, to inform them concerning any fact or doctrine, of which they might have occasion to speak.

This is farther confirmed by the title which is given him no less than thrice in this discourse, *The Spirit of Truth*; almost in a breath with these great and weighty circumstances, that he should *abide with them for ever*; (John xiv. 16, 17.) that he should *guide them into all truth*; that he should *teach them all things, yea and shew them things to come*; (John xvi. 13.) which must surely secure them from any danger of erring in relating things that were past. But lest any should be perverse enough to dispute the consequence, our Lord particularly mentions this effect of the Spirit's operation, that they should thereby be fitted to bear a testimony to him, as those who had long been conversant with him, and whose memories were miraculously assisted in recollecting those discourses which they had heard from him: (John xv. 26, 27.) *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from*

the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also (being so assisted) shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. And again, (John xiv. 26.) The Holy Ghost shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Soon after this our Lord, on the very day in which he rose from the dead, in a dependance on the aids of this promised Spirit, gives them a commission, which nothing but its plenary inspiration could have answered, or have qualified them to fulfil: for coming to them, he declares, (John xx. 21.) *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you: and upon this he breathed upon them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose soever ye retain, they are retained:* which, whether it signifies a power of inflicting and removing miraculous punishments, or of authoritatively declaring that sins were in particular instances were forgiven or retained, must either way suppose such a constant presence of
Christ

Christ with them, as it is hard, or rather impossible, to reconcile, with supposing them to err in what they wrote for the instruction of the church in succeeding ages.

These are the grand passages, on which I rest this part of the argument: yet I think, I ought not to omit those, in which Christ promises them such extraordinary assistance of the Spirit, while defending his cause in the presence of magistrates; and it is the more proper to mention them, as the language in which they are made is so remarkable. On this occasion then he tells them, (Matt. x. 19, 20.) *When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, for it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.* May we not therefore on the same principles conclude, that when they were to write for the use of all future generations of christians, it was not so much they who wrote, as the Spirit of the Father, who in effect wrote by them, and as it were dictated to them? For the occasion will surely appear as important, in one in-

stance, as in the other ; or rather much more important in the latter, than the former ; as an error in their writings would have a much more extensive and lasting influence, than a slip of their tongues in a transient pleading before a magistrate. Nay, to give this argument the greatest possible weight, we find that the same promise was made, almost in the very same words, (Luke xii. 11, 12.) to persons in the dignity of their office inferior to the apostles ; I mean, to the seventy ; which might have intitled their writings to such a regard, as I am now labouring to engage to those of their superiors.

I shall only farther remind the reader, that our Lord, when just ascending to heaven, refers to that effusion of the Spirit which was quickly after to happen, even before they departed from Jerusalem, as the æra, from whence the grand accomplishment of the promises relating to the aids of the Spirit was to be dated. (See Luke xxiv. 49. Acts i. 4, 5.) And as all the apostolical writings which now remain, were written several years after that event, it plainly proves, they lie within
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the period, in which they were to expect all the assistance which these promises import.

The most plausible objection, which can be urged against the application of these promises to the matter now before us, is this:
“ That these promises only refer to the supernatural assistance, granted to the apostles on great and pressing occasions: but
“ that they might easily, without such assistance, have written a true account of the
“ life and preaching of Christ, and of such
“ other facts as they record; and consequently, that their historical writings at
“ least, how credible soever we suppose them,
“ might be drawn up without any inspiration at all.”

To this I might reply, That if it be allowed, that the apostles, in the books which contain the evangelical history, wrote the exact truth, and that in their epistles they have made a right and unerring representation of the revelation with which they were charged, so that we may safely make their writings a rule both of faith and

practice, the remaining question would only be about the propriety of using the word inspiration when speaking of them ; and therefore would, on the principles I have laid down above, be comparatively of small importance. Yet I think it easy, in that view of the question, to prove that these writings could not have been thus entirely credible, if they had not been written under such a full inspiration of superintendency, as is stated in the first part of this discourse.

I do indeed allow, and no candid man can dispute it, that the penmen of the New Testament, supposing them able to write at all, might merely by the natural exercise of their memory, under the direction of the common sense and reason of men, have given us a plain, faithful, and very useful account, of many extraordinary scenes, to which they had been witnesses during the time they conversed with Jesus on earth, and in which they were active after his ascension. And I cannot forbear saying, that supposing the truth of the grand leading facts, (as that Jesus of Nazareth taught a doctrine confirmed by miracles,

acles, and was himself raised from the dead,) I should have esteemed such writings, supposing them merely an honest account of what such men must have known, to be beyond all comparison the most valuable records of antiquity. But when these writings came to be perused, it is evident to me from the particular contents of them, that honest and worthy men would never have pretended to have written in such a manner, if they had not been conscious of superior direction, and extraordinary divine influence.

For the historians of whom we speak, do not merely give us a very circumstantial account of actions; as what journies Christ made, what miracles he performed, in what manner he was received, where, and how he died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven: but they do also, as we may reasonably expect they should, give us an account of the *doctrine* he taught: and indeed, if they had not done this, the knowledge of his story, amazing as it is, would have been but an unprofitable amusement to us. Nor do they content themselves with giving us a short
summary

summary of his doctrine, or a view of the religion he intended to introduce, as the general result of their having attended so long on his instructions: but they presume to tell us *his very words*. And here, they do not merely relate some short sayings, the remarkable poignancy of which, or their propriety to the circumstances in which they were spoken, might have struck the memory with a peculiar force; but they insert long discourses, which he made on public occasions; though they do not pretend, that he left any copies of them, or that they themselves took them from any written memoirs whatsoever: and it is worth our notice, that (besides the many shorter sayings and replies with which history is interspersed,) near one half of the four gospels is taken up with the insertion of these discourses*.

Now it was highly necessary, that if these speeches of our Lord were recorded at all,

* If my computation does not deceive me, the number of verses contained in these discourses, to that of the whole, is as about 1700, to 3779, which is the number of verses in the four gospels.

they should be recorded with great exactness: for many of them relate to the system of doctrines which he came to teach: and others of them are predictions of future events, referring to a great variety of curious circumstances, where a small mistake might greatly have affected the credit of the prediction, and with it the cause of christianity in general: so that common prudence would have taught the apostles to wave them, rather than pretend to deliver them to posterity, if they had not been sure they could have done it exactly.

But how could they have expected to have done this, merely by the natural strength of their own memories: unless we imagine each of them to be a prodigy in that respect, to which no one of them makes the least shadow of a pretence? It is well known, that several of those speeches of Christ which *Matthew* and *John* give us, (not now to mention the other evangelists,) contain several pages; and some of them cannot be deliberately and decently read over in less than a quarter of an hour. Now I believe, if my reader would
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make the experiment on any thing of that length which he read or heard yesterday, or even on one of those discourses of Christ, though perhaps he has read or heard it an hundred times; he would find, on a careful examination, many things would probably be omitted; many transposed; many expressed in a different manner: and were he to write a copy of such a discourse from his memory, and then critically to compare it with the original, he would find the sense, in many particulars where there was some general resemblance, more different than he could perhaps have imagined; and variations, which at first seemed but inconsiderable, would appear greatly to affect the sense, when they came to be more nicely reviewed. If this would so probably be the case with ninety-nine out of a hundred of mankind, (and I certainly speak within compass,) when a discourse to be repeated, had been delivered but a day or an hour before; what could be expected from the apostles, with an interval of so many years? And especially from *John*, who has, in proportion to the length of his gospel, re-
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corded more speeches than any of the rest, and wrote them (if we may credit the most authentic tradition,) more than half a century after our Lord's ascension?

This argument would have great weight, with relation to a man, whose life was ever so peaceful, and his affairs contracted in the narrowest sphere: but it will be greatly strengthened, when we come to consider the multitude and variety of scenes, and those too the most interesting that can be imagined, through which the apostles passed. When we consider all their labours, and their cares; the journies they were continually taking; the novelty of objects perpetually surrounding them; and, above all, the persecutions and dangers to which they were daily exposed; and the strong manner in which the mind is struck, and the memory of past circumstances erased, by such occurrences; I cannot conceive, that any reader will be so unreasonable, as to imagine, these things could have been written with any exactness by the apostles, if they had not been miraculously assisted in recording them. And what is particularly

larly mentioned by the last of these writers, of the promised agency of the Spirit to *bring to their remembrance all things* they had heard from Christ himself; (John xiv. 26.) must I think incontestably prove, that this was one purpose for which the Spirit was given; and therefore we may be sure, that it was a purpose for which it was needed.

I hope I have by this time convinced my readers, that it is agreeable to the other circumstances of the apostles story, and to the promises which our Lord so largely and so frequently made to them, (and the frequent repetition of the promise strongly intimates the importance of it,) to suppose, that they were indeed favoured with a full inspiration in their writings.

But to compleat the argument, it must be observed, That these holy men (for such the history plainly shews them to have been,) assume to themselves such an authority, and speak of their own discourses and writings in such peculiar language, as nothing but a consciousness of such inspiration could warrant, or even excuse.

To make us duly sensible of the force of this argument, let us hear *Paul*, *Peter*, and *John*, and we shall find the remark applicable to them all ; though as *St. Paul* wrote much more than either of the latter, we may naturally expect to find the most frequent instances of it in his writings.

When the apostle *Paul* had taken notice to the Corinthians, that the subject of his preaching was *the wisdom of God in a mystery*, and related to things which transcended the sense and imagination of men, he adds, (1 Cor. ii. 10.) *But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit ; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God : And again, (ver. 12.) We have received, not the spirit of the world, so as to act in that artful way, which a regard to secular advantage dictates ; but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God.* Now it is natural to conclude from hence, that this knowledge being given them, not merely or chiefly for themselves, but for the church, (in which view they speak of themselves and their office, as the gift of God to the church ; compare Eph.

Eph. iv. 11, 12. and 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.) they should be assisted to communicate it in a proper manner ; since otherwise, the end of God in giving it to them would be frustrated. But the apostle does not content himself with barely suggesting this ; but he asserts it in the most express terms : (1 Cor. ii. 13.) *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, that is, not with a vain ostentation of human eloquence ; but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; comparing spiritual things with spiritual ;* or, as some would render and paraphrase it, adapting spiritual expressions to spiritual things *. And in the close of the chapter, when with a noble freedom, in a consciousness of the distinguished character he bore, he puts the question to the whole world besides ; *Who hath known the mind of the Lord ?* he adds, *But we have the mind of Christ.* Which last clause plainly determines the sense, in which we are to take those words at the close of chap. vii.. *And I*

* Πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκεινῶτες.

think

*think also, that I have the Spirit of God**; that is, "I certainly appear to have it:" or, "it is evident and apparent, that my pretences to it are not a vain boast." For, after having so expressly asserted it just above, none can imagine, he meant here to insinuate, that he was uncertain, whether he had it, or not. He appeals therefore to those whose gifts were most eminent, to dispute it if they could: (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, that is, if he have ever so good evidence that he really is so, (for it cannot be thought, he meant to appeal only to those, who falsely pretended to these endowments,) let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*—In his second epistle to the Corinthians, (chap. ii. 10.) he speaks of forgiving offenders in the person of Christ; and amidst the humblest acknowledgments of his own insufficiency, boasts a sufficiency of God, who had made him an able minister of the New Testament. (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.)

* Δοκω δὲ καὶ γὰρ Πνεύματος Θεοῦ ἔχειν

Of which he was so thoroughly sensible, that in the first epistle which he ever wrote (so far as scripture informs us,) to any of the churches, I mean, his first epistle to the Thessalonians, he ventures to say, (chap. iv. 8.) *He that despiseth*, that is, (as the context plainly implies,) he that despiseth or rejecteth what I now write, *despiseth not man*, only or chiefly, *but God, who hath given us his holy Spirit*; which manifestly intimates, that what he wrote was under supernatural divine guidance and influence, as in the second verse of that chapter he had spoken of *commandments* which he had *given them by the Lord Jesus Christ*; just as he afterwards declared to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) how well he was able to give *proofs of Christ speaking in him*.—In his epistle to the Galatians, the apostle solemnly assures them, (Gal. i. 11, 12.) that the gospel which he had preached among them, *was not after man*, that is, not of any human original: and he gives this substantial proof of it, that he was himself taught it, no otherwise than by the *immediate revelation of Jesus Christ*. Agreeably to which assertion, when he gives the
Corinthians

Corinthians an account of the institution and design of the Lord's supper, he says in so many words, (1 Cor. xi. 23.) *that he had received of the Lord what he delivered unto them*; that is, that he had his notion of that sacrament, and of the actions and words of Christ on which it was founded, by an immediate inspiration from him, or, in the language we have used above, by suggestion. And he speaks of his brethren, as well as of himself, in these terms, (Eph. iii. 3, 5.) *that the mystery of Christ which was before unknown*, that is, the right of the Gentiles on believing the gospel to full communion with the christian church, *was made known to the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*, and not merely by the natural recollection of what they had heard Christ say, or by their own reasonings upon it.

Most agreeable to this is the strain of *Peter*, who in one epistle joins the *commandment of the apostles* with *the words of the holy prophets*; (2 Pet. iii. 2.) and mentions the epistles of *Paul* with *other scriptures*, (ver. 15, 16.) no doubt in allusion to the sacred oracles of

the Old Testament, which so generally went by that name. And in his other epistles he insists strenuously upon it, that *the gospel was preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*, in exact conformity to the prophetic oracles of former ages, not understood by those who uttered them ; a circumstance, in this connection, highly worthy our remark : and he seems strongly to intimate, that the angels themselves did by these apostolic preachings learn some things, which with all their superior faculties they did not before so fully know : *Which things*, says he, *the angels desire to look into* ; (1 Pet. i. 12.) As Paul had also said, that to *the principalities and powers in heavenly places was made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*. Eph. iii. 10.

To conclude this argument, St. John, remarkable as he was for his singular modesty and ingenuity of temper, does not only tell us, that Jesus Christ shewed him the revelation, (Rev. i. 1.) but speaks in his epistle, of *an unction poured out from the Holy One*, by which they *knew all things*. (1 John ii. 20.) And in another passage he, in effect asserts, that he had, in concurrence with his brethren,
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given such abundant proof of his being under a divine influence and direction in his teaching, whether by word or letter, that an agreement or disagreement with his doctrine was to be made the standard by which they might judge of truth or error, and obedience or disobedience to his injunctions the test of a good or a bad man; which is considerably more, than merely asserting the fullest inspiration. (1 John iv. 6.) *We are of God: He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us: Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

I might here add, if it were necessary, the several passages of the New Testament, in which the gospel preached by the apostles, is called *the gospel of God*; (such as 2 Cor. xi. 7. 1 Tim. i. 11. and the like :) But I omit them, as the stress of the controversy does undoubtedly rest on these I have mentioned; and the importance of the question must be my defence, for so large an enumeration of texts which are so well known.

I shall only remind my reader in a few words, of those many passages, in which the

gospel as preached by the apostles, is so evidently equalled with, yea and preferred to, the law given by Moses, and the messages brought to the Jews by the succeeding prophets. These afford a further illustration of this argument, which will appear with very considerable weight, when we reflect on the high opinions they had of the Old Testament, and the honourable terms in which they speak of it, as the *word and oracles of God*, (Rom. iii. 2.) as *given by his inspiration*, (2 Tim. iii. 16.) and as that *which holy men spake, as they were moved*, or borne on, [φερομένοι] *by the Holy Ghost*. (2 Pet. i. 21.) None can fail of observing, that they quote its authority, on all occasions, as decisive; yea, our Lord himself strongly intimates, not only the strict truth of the whole, but (which is much more) that it were intolerable to suppose it chargeable with any impropriety of expression; for this must be the sense of those remarkable words, (John x. 35.) that *the scripture cannot be broken*; and the whole force of our Lord's argument depends upon interpreting them thus. I might argue at large the improbability,

bility, and indeed the great absurdity of supposing, that such assistances were given to Moses and the prophets, as to make their writings an infallible rule of faith and practice, and that the subjects of God's only begotten Son, and the grand minister in his kingdom, should be left destitute of equal assistance in their works and writings. I think the argument would be unanswerable, if considered apart: but I now mention it in another view, as illustrating the persuasion the apostles had of their own inspiration, when they speak of their teachings and decisions, as equally authentic with those of the illustrious prophets, for whom they had so great and so just a regard.

I am fully satisfied, that this last argument, from the manner in which the apostles speak of themselves in their writings, will strike the reader, in proportion to the degree in which he reflects upon the true character of these excellent men, and especially upon that modesty and humility, in which they bore so bright and so lovely a resemblance of their divine master. Let him ask himself, What

he would think of any minister of Christ now, supposing him ever so eminent for learning, wisdom, and piety, that should assume to himself such an authority? Suppose such a man, under the influence of no miraculous guidance, to say, not with reference to what he might quote from others, but with regard to his own dictates, “The things which I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord: He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God: We have the mind of Christ; and he that heareth not us, that receiveth not our dictates in religion, is not of God:” Suppose, I say, such language as this to be used, publicly by any christian minister now on earth, and you must necessarily suppose his character from that very hour overthrown. The whole world would immediately join in loudly demanding miraculous proofs to verify such assertions; or in condemning, with just indignation, such a claim unsupported by them, as an unpardonable lording it over men’s faith and conscience, and thrusting themselves into their master’s throne. Let us not then charge the

the holy apostles with a conduct, of which we should not suspect any wise and good man now upon the face of the earth; and which if we saw in any of our friends, our charity and respect for them would incline us to enquire after some marks of lunacy in them, as its best excuse.

I have now given an easy and popular view of the principal arguments for the inspiration of the New Testament, on which my own faith in that important doctrine rests; and such an one, as I hope by the divine blessing may be useful to others. I shall not enter into a particular consideration of the several objections against it, which chiefly arise from texts of scripture, in which some pretend to find, that the apostles were actually mistaken. I have considered most of these objections already, in my notes on the texts from whence they are taken: for almost all of them relate to passages in the historical books, and I don't know that I have omitted any of them; but have every where given (though as briefly as I could,) such solutions

as appeared to me in conscience satisfactory, though I have not stood formally to discuss them as objections against the inspiration of those books.

The reader will observe, that very few instances have occurred, in which I have judged it necessary to allow an error in our present copies: but as in those few instances the supposed change of a word or two makes the matter perfectly easy, I think it most respectful to the sacred writings, to account for the seeming difficulty thus, and to impute it to the transcribers; (though it is certain, some of these mistakes, supposing them such, did happen very early;) because, as Mr. Seed very properly expresses it in his excellent sermon on this subject*, (which, since I wrote the former part of this dissertation, fell into my hands,) “ a partial inspiration
“ is to all intents and purposes no inspira-
“ tion at all: for,” as he justly argues against the supposition of any mixture of error in these sacred writings, “ mankind would

* See Mr. Seed's serm. vol. ii. pag. 322.

“ be as much embarrassed, to know what was
“ inspired, and what was not, as they could be
“ to collect a religion for themselves ; the con-
“ sequence of which would be, that we are left
“ just where we were, and that God put him-
“ self to a great expence of miracles to effect
“ nothing at all : a consequence, highly de-
“ rogatory and injurious to his honour.”

The arguments brought from a few passages in the epistles, to prove that the apostles did not think themselves inspired, weak as they are, will be considered, if God permit, in their proper places. At present I shall content myself with referring the reader to Dr. *Whitby*, who I think has given a satisfactory solution to them all.

There are other objections of a quite different class, with which I have no concern ; because they affect only such a degree of inspiration, as I think it not prudent, and assurance is not necessary, to assert. I leave them therefore to be answered by those, if any such there be, who imagine that Paul would need an immediate revelation from heaven, and a miraculous dictate of the Holy Ghost, to re-
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mind Timothy of the cloak and writings which he left at Troas, or to advise him to mingle a little wine with his water.

Waving therefore the farther discussion of these topics, on which it would be more easy than profitable to enlarge, I shall conclude this dissertation with a reflection or two of a practical nature, into which I earnestly intreat the reader to enter with a becoming attention.

Let me engage him seriously to pause, and consider, what sort of an impression it ought to make upon us, to think that we have such a book ; a book, written by a full divine inspiration : that amidst all the uncertain variety of human reasonings and conjectures, we have a celestial guide through the labyrinth : that God hath condescended to take care, that we should have a most authentic and unerring account of certain important, though very distant facts, many of which were wrought with his own hand ; and with these facts, should have a system
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of most weighty and interesting doctrines, to the truth of which He makes himself a witness. Such a book must to every considerate person appear an inestimable treasure ; and it certainly calls for our most affectionate acknowledgment, that God should confer such a favour on any of his creatures, and much more on those, who by abusing in too many instances their natural light, had made themselves so utterly unworthy of supernatural.

From this view of the inspiration of scripture we may also infer, our obligation to study it with the greatest attention and care ; to read it in our closets and our families ; and to search in the most diligent and impartial manner into its genuine sense, design, and tendency ; which is in the main so evident, that no upright heart can fail of understanding it, and every truly good heart must delight to comply with it. This is indeed a most important inference, and that without which all our convictions of its divine authority will only condemn us before God and our own consciences. Let us therefore
always

always remember, that in consequence of all these important premises we are indispensably obliged, to receive with calm and reverent submission all the dictates of scripture; to make it our oracle; and in this respect, to set it at a due distance from all other writings whatsoever; as it is certain, there is no other book in the world, that can pretend to equal authority, and produce equal or comparable proofs to support such a pretension. Let us measure the truth of our own sentiments, or those of others, in the great things which scripture teaches, by their conformity to it. And O that the powerful charm of this blessed book might prevail to draw all that do sincerely regard it, into this center of unity! That dropping those unscriptural forms, which have so lamentably divided the church, we might more generally content ourselves with the simplicity of divine truths as they are here taught, and agree to put the mildest and kindest interpretation we can, upon the language and sentiments of each other. This is what I cannot forbear inculcating again and again, from a firm persuasion, that it is agreeable to
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the spirit of the gospel, and pleasing to its great author : and I inculcate it in this place, and at this time, with peculiar affection, as the providence of God around us calls us loudly to do all we can with a safe conscience, to promote an union among protestants. And I heartily pray, that our mutual jealousies and prejudices, which some are so unseasonably labouring to exasperate, may not provoke God to drive us together by a storm of persecution ; if peradventure the bond of suffering together may be strong enough to bind those, whom the endearments of the same christian profession, the same rule of faith, of manners, and of hope, have not yet been able to unite.

On the whole, Let me most affectionately invite and intreat every reader, whatsoever his rank in life, or his proficiency in learning may be, seriously to consider the practical design of these sacred oracles, the sense and authority of which I have been endeavouring to explain and assert. It is indeed a mystery in divine providence, that there should still
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remain so much difficulty in them, as that in many points of doctrine thoughtful, serious, and, I trust, upright men should form such different opinions concerning the interpretation of so many passages, and the justice of consequences drawn from them, on the one side, and on the other. But of this there can be no controversy, “ That the great design of the New Testament (in delightful harmony with the Old,) is to call off our minds from the present world, to establish us in the belief of a future state, and to form us to a serious preparation for it, by bringing us to a lively faith in Christ, and, as the genuine effect of that, to a filial love to God, and a fraternal affection for each other:” Or, in one word, (and a weightier and more comprehensive sentence was never written,) *to teach us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* (Tit. ii. 12, 13.) To His almighty hand may our souls be committed, by a faith productive
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of these glorious fruits : and, under the sanctifying, quickening, and supporting influences of His Spirit, may we wait for his mercy unto eternal life ! Then shall no terror of suffering, no allurements of pleasure, no sophistry of error, be able to seduce us ; but guided by that light and truth which shines forth in the sacred pages, we shall march on to that holy hill ; where, having happily escaped all the dangers of that dark path which we now tread, we shall greet the dawning of an everlasting day, the arising of a day star which shall go down no more. Amen !

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P O S T S C R I P T.

A Sketch of the Arguments, by which the Inspiration of the Old Testament may be proved in the easiest method, and by the most solid and convincing evidence.

IF the proof of the inspiration of the Old Testament be deduced in its full compass from its first principles, we must have recourse to a method, very nearly resembling that which is taken in the three sermons referred to above, for proving the authority of the New ; that is, we must first prove, That the books are genuine ; and then, That the history which they contain is credible : from which premises the inspiration of the Old Testament may easily be inferred, by a train of arguments similar to that which we have pursued in the dissertation above.

For proving the genuineness of the books, I should think it proper briefly to shew, (what I think

think hardly any will be so ignorant and confident as to deny,) That the Jewish religion is of considerable antiquity, and was founded by Moses about fifteen hundred years before Christ's time: and farther,—That the Jews, before and at the time of Christ, had books among them bearing the titles of those which make up what we protestants call the canonical books of the Old Testament:—

And that these books, then received in the Jewish church, were the genuine works of the persons to whom they were respectively ascribed:—From hence it is easy farther to shew, that they have not suffered, and (considering what a guard the Jews and Christians were upon each other,) could not suffer, any material alteration since; and consequently, that the Old Testament, as now extant in the Hebrew and Chaldee languages, is genuine, and in the main such as it originally was.

In order to prove its credibility from this established medium, we may prepare the way, by shewing, That many material facts which are there recorded, are also mentioned by very antient heathen writers.—And it is yet more

important to shew, as we very easily may, That there is room to go over the same leading thoughts, with those insisted upon in the second of the three sermons mentioned above, and to argue the credibility of the story, from the certain opportunities which the writers had of informing themselves as to the certain truth of the grand facts which they assert, as having themselves been personally concerned in them; and from those many marks of integrity and piety to be found in their writings, which may do as much as any thing of that kind can do, to obviate any suspicion of an intention to deceive.—We may here also advance farther, and demonstrate beyond all contradiction, That the facts asserted were of such a nature, as could not possibly have gained credit, had they been false: yet that they did gain most assured credit, of which the persons receiving these books gave the most substantial evidence that can be imagined, by receiving, on the authority of these facts, a system of laws, which though considered as to be divinely supported they were admirably wise, yet were of such a nature, that

that without such an extraordinary providence as nothing but an assurance of such an original could have warranted them to expect, they must necessarily have proved ruinous to the state they were intended to regulate and establish *.

A farther and very noble evidence of the truth of the grand facts attested in the Old Testament, and of the inspiration of a considerable part of it, may be drawn from the consideration of those numerous and various predictions to be found in it; which refer to a multitude of events, several of them before utterly unexampled, which no human sagacity could possibly have foreseen, and which nevertheless happened exactly according to those predictions †.

* The reader will easily imagine, I here refer especially to the laws, relating to letting all the land lie fallow together once in seven years, and two years together at every jubilee; the desertion of their borders at the three great feasts, when all the males went up to the tabernacle or temple; and the disuse of cavalry; to omit some others.

† See Dr. Sykes's *Connection*.

Having advanced thus far, we may take up a set of arguments correspondent to those insisted on above, to prove from its genuineness and credibility, now supposed to be evinced, That the Old Testament was written by a superintendent inspiration: and this we may argue, not merely, or chiefly, from the tradition to this purpose, so generally and so early prevailing in the Jewish church, though that is considerable; nor even from those very signal and glorious internal evidences of various kinds, which every competent judge may easily see and feel; but from surveying the character and circumstances of the persons by whom the several books were written, in comparison with the genius of that dispensation under which they lived and wrote. This may, in all the branches of the argument, be proved in this way, with the greatest ease and strength, concerning Moses, and his writings: and when the authority of the pentateuch is established, that of the most material succeeding books stands in so easy and natural a connection with it, that I think few have been found, at least since the controversy

troverſy between the Jews and the Samaritans, who have in good earneſt allowed Moſes to have been a meſſenger from heaven, and denied the inſpiration of the prophets, and of the books which we receive as written by them.

But it is obvious, that the illuſtration of all theſe propoſitions would be the work of a large volume, rather than of ſuch a poſtſcript to a diſſertation, itſelf of ſo moderate a length. I have diſcuſſed them all, with the moſt material objections which have been advanced againſt them, in my *Theological Lectures*, which it is my continual care to render worthy the acceptance of the public in due time, by ſuch alterations and additions as frequent reviews, in conjunction with what occurs to me in reading, converſation, or meditation, may ſuggeſt*.

I ſhall conclude theſe hints, with the mention of one argument for the inſpiration of the Old Teſtament, entirely independent on all

* Theſe have been publiſhed ſince the author's death in one vol. 4to.

the former: which a few words may set in a convincing light, and which must be satisfactory to all who see the reasonableness of acquiescing in what I have urged above. I mean,——That the inspiration, and consequently the genuineness and credibility, of the Old Testament, may be certainly inferred from that of the New *: Because our Lord
and

* It may be objected to this, that the authority of the New Testament, as stated in the sermons referred to, and in most other defences of christianity, is in part proved from the prophecies of the Old; so that the argument here urged would be circular. To which I would answer, (1.) That if we were to take this medium alone, we must indeed subtract from the proof of christianity all that branch of its evidence which grows from prophecies in the Old Testament; and then, all that arises from miracles, internal arguments, and the wonderful events which have followed its first promulgation, would stand in their full force, first to demonstrate (I think, to high satisfaction) the divine original of the New Testament, and then to prove the authority of the Old. (2.) That most of the enemies of the Mosaick and Christian revelations do nevertheless own those which we call the prophetic books of the Old Testament to be more antient than the New: and

and his apostles were so far from charging the scribes and pharisees, (who on all proper occasions are censured so freely,) with having introduced into the sacred volume any merely human compositions ; that on the contrary, they not only recommend a diligent and constant perusal of these scriptures, as of the greatest importance to men's eternal happiness ; but speak of them as divine oracles, and as written by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of the authors.

I desire, that the following list of scriptures may be attentively consulted, and reflected on, in this view. I might have added a great many more, indeed several hundreds, in which the sacred writers of the New Testament ar-

on this foundation alone, without first taking for granted, that they are either inspired or genuine, we derive an argument for christianity, from their mere existence ; and then may argue backward, that they were divinely inspired, and therefore genuine ; and so by a farther consequence, may infer from them the divine authority of the Mosaick religion, which they so evidently attest : which is an argument something distinct from the testimony of the authors of the New Testament, but important enough to deserve a mention.

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gue from those of the Old, in such a manner, as nothing could have justified, but a firm persuasion that they were divinely inspired. Now as the Jews always allowed, "that the testimony of an approved prophet was sufficient to confirm the mission of one who was supported by it;" so I think every reasonable man will readily conclude, that no inspired person can erroneously attest another to be inspired: and indeed the very definition of plenary inspiration, as stated above, absolutely excludes any room for cavilling on so plain a head. I throw the particular passages which I chuse to mention, into the margin below*.

To save the reader the trouble, which few may be disposed to take, of turning to these passages in the bible, (as the author earnestly recommends) the present editor has transcribed them at length.

* *John v. 39.* Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me.

Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10. He (Jesus) answered and said, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

God.—It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.—It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Mark xii. 24. Jesus answering said to them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures?

Luke x. 26, 27. He said unto him, what is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c. and he said unto him, thou hast answered right.

Mat. v. 17, 18. Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil them. 'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.

xxi. 42. Did you never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

xxiii. 29, 31, 43. Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures.—Have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, &c.—How then doth DAVID in spirit call him Lord? saying—

xxiv. 15. When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by DANIEL the prophet.

xxiv. 54, 56. But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?—But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.

Luke

Luke i. 67—70. Zacharias prophesied saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.

xvi. 31. If they hear not MOSES and the prophets, &c.

xxiv. 25, 27. O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!—And beginning at MOSES and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

John x. 35. If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken—

Acts ii. 16, 25. This is that which was spoken by the prophet JOEL.—It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit, &c.—For DAVID speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before me, &c.

iii. 22, 24. MOSES truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up of your brethren like unto me, &c.—Yea and all the prophets from SAMUEL and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

iv. 25. Who by the mouth of thy servant DAVID hast said, Why did the heathen rage? &c.

xvii. 2. They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.

Acts xviii. 24, 28. Apollos—mighty in the scriptures—He mightily convinced the Jews—shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

xxviii. 25. Well spake the Holy Ghost by *ESAIAS* the prophet, unto our fathers, saying—

Rom. iii. 2, 10. Unto them [*the Jews*] were committed the oracles of God.—As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one.

ix. 25, 27, 29. As he saith also in *OSEE* [*Hosea*] I will call them my people which were not, &c.—*ESAIAS* also crieth concerning Israel, though the number, &c.—And as *ESAIAS* said before, except the Lord of hosts, &c.

x. 5, 11, 16. *MOSES* describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth these things shall live by them.—For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.—*ESAIAS* saith, Lord who hath believed our report?

xv. 4. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

xvi. 26. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known unto all nations.

1 *Cor.* x. 11. Now all these things happened unto them [*the ancient Jews*] for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition.

2 *Cor.*

2 *Cor.* iv. 13. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed therefore have I spoken, we also believe and therefore speak.

vi. 16. 17. Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, &c. wherefore come out from among them—saith the Lord, &c.

Gal. iii. 8. The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto ABRAHAM saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

1 *Tim.* v. 18. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.

2 *Tim.* iii. 15, 16. From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, &c.—All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, &c.

Heb. i. 1, 5—13. God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.—Unto which of the angels saith he at any time, Thou art my son?—Again, I will be to him a father, &c. &c. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne O God is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness, &c.

iii. 7. As the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice.

James ii. 8. If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, &c.

iv. 5, 6. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

He:

He giveth more grace, wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, &c.

1 *Pet.* i. 10—12. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired—who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, unto whom it was revealed—that unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, &c.

2 *Pet.* i. 19—21. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well to take heed—for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

T H E E N D.

